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Merrimack hires environmental attorney as Kinder Morgan eyes town for pipeline route

By *TINA FORBES*

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MERRIMACK – As the proposed Kinder Morgan natural gas pipeline continues to raise questions in Town Hall, Merrimack officials hired an environmental attorney for guidance.

Town Council Chair Nancy Harrington announced last week the town has retained Joanna Tourangeau's services. "It was decided that this attorney...is going to provide...and give guidance to all of us on when we should respond and how should we," said Harrington. "We have in fact hired her to guide us through this process to protect our interest, the town's interest."

Harrington said Tourangeau, from [Drummond Woodsum Attorneys At Law](#), has 15 years experience dealing with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission.

The decision comes several months after Kinder Morgan redrew a proposed natural gas pipeline to cut through Merrimack, prompting concerns from residents and town officials. Recent town council meetings included discussion on the logistics of eminent domain, and when and how Kinder Morgan can begin to survey town and private land.

"We're not going to do anything in terms of responding until we get guidance from her," Harrington said, regarding a town response for Kinder Morgan's request for survey public land, such as Horse Hill Nature Preserve.

"It's a very lengthy, a very complex process. I felt much more comfortable that we had someone backing us up," said Harrington.

Town officials are continuing to press Kinder Morgan representatives to set a public forum to answer questions from residents. Although no date has been set, the company has said a meeting will likely take place in March.

The Northeast Energy Direct Project has proposed the construction of a natural gas pipeline though more than four miles of Merrimack. The project would impact 61 landowners and cut through Gilmore Hill Memorial Forest and Horse Hill Nature Preserve.

In exchange, the project is expected to give the town an estimated \$538,306 in annual property tax payments. The Tennessee Gas Pipeline Company, a subsidiary of Kinder Morgan, is developing the Northeast Energy Direct Project.

Kinder Morgan operates about 50 miles of gas pipeline in New Hampshire and the current

proposed route, the company's second try for this project, enters the state in Cheshire County and heads east into Hillsborough County, going through Greenville, Mason, Brookline, Milford, Amherst, Merrimack, Hudson and Litchfield, and Londonderry before heading to Dracut, Mass. to meet with a compression station.

The previous route would have affected Hollis, including Beaver Brook, but the plan was nixed following opposition from residents and officials.

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